

**SUMMARY OF THE
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 13, 2001**

The Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST), on Tuesday, March 13, 2001. The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Barbara Burmeister of the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. The main purpose of this meeting was to finalize committee nominations, finalize proposed changes to Chapter 2, its appendices, and the PT field of testing, and discuss the PT method codes.

INTRODUCTION

Ms. Burmeister reviewed the minutes from the teleconference on February 13, 2001 and from the subcommittee and committee meetings on February 26-27, 2001, in Fort Meade, MD. The committee agreed that all three sets of minutes are final. The status of Action Items is as follows:

February 13, 2001

- Mr. Anand Mudambi did not assemble a list of reasons for doing corrective action samples, but the topic was discussed during the subcommittee meeting on February 26, 2001, and recommendations were made by the subcommittee.
- Ms. RaeAnn Haynes drafted a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) to explain how an accrediting authority evaluates a result of "No Eval" or "Not Reported."
- Ms. Barb Burmeister edited the FAQ which clarifies how the PT provider reports blank results to the accrediting authority.
- Mr. Ralph Obenauf revised the proposal for developing method codes. This will be discussed in today's meeting.
- The field of testing issue and potential solutions were discussed at the committee's meetings on February 26-27, 2001.

February 26, 2001

- The committee agreed that a FAQ was needed to remind laboratories to follow PT provider directions and report no more than three significant figures. This has not been done yet, but Ms. Burmeister volunteered to draft the FAQ.
- Ms. Burmeister said that she would wait until after today's meeting to send proposed changes for Section 2.6 and B.5 to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) PT Providers and the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) Accrediting Authority Group for input and commitment to adopt.
- Ms. Burmeister sent written comments regarding a proposed change to Section 1.8.1 (field of accreditation) to Chapter 1.
- Ms. Burmeister sent written comments regarding a proposed change to Section 4.1.4 to Chapter 4.
- The working group on zero issues has not yet met to discuss and draft a table of PT detection limits. The expected completion date for this item is 4/10/01.

- Ms. Burmeister said that she will email Mr. Ed Glick, from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Water, today to invite him to join the zero issues working group.
- Mr. Ralph Obenauf, Mr. Charlie Dyer, and Mr. Chuck Wibby are working on a draft for the standard method code list using NELAP accrediting authority method data.

February 27, 2001

- Ms. Burmeister contacted members of the committee who were absent from the meeting on February 27, 2001. She obtained their input regarding nominations for new committee members.
- Ms. Burmeister contacted Dr. Ken Jackson about forming a task group to define analyte groups. She said that the Program Policy and Structure Committee will be developing their own list of analyte groups for accreditation. Mr. Matt Caruso has drafted a list of analyte groups for the proficiency testing. This will be discussed in today's meeting.
- The committee will discuss development of a new procedure for the annual review and timetable for implementation of additions to the PT field of testing tables during their next teleconference meeting.
- The committee will discuss language for Section B.1.2 regarding PT sample composition of analyte groups during today's meeting.
- The committee will develop a procedure for adding new method codes to the master method code list. This will be discussed during the next teleconference meeting.
- Ms. Burmeister has not yet responded to the comments from Ms. Jane Jensen and Mr. Fred Choske of the California Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP) and Mr. Steve Nackord of Davis Labs in Florida.

SELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Ms. Burmeister provided the committee with a summary of the committee nominations. The committee finalized the nominations and Ms. Burmeister said that she will contact the nominees to see if they accept. She will then notify Dr. Charles Brokopp.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO CHAPTER 2 AND APPENDICES (FROM WORKING GROUPS)

Ms. Burmeister made revisions to Chapter 2 and its appendices per the decisions made during the meeting on February 27, 2001 and then sent the revised document to the committee for review. She reminded the committee that proposed changes to the chapter are due to Ms. Jeanne Hankins on March 19, 2001.

Section 2.6 and B.5 were revised to include new report format requirements. Section 2.6 lists the minimum reporting requirements for the PT providers. Section B.5 requires the providers to submit electronic files to the primary accrediting authorities in the format described in the U.S. EPA Criteria Document at a minimum. She said that no comments had been received about the proposed changes.

Sections 2.3.3, 2.7.2, 2.7.3 were revised to include new language for supplemental PT studies for demonstrating corrective action and for adding new fields of testing to a laboratory's scope of accreditation. A recommendation was made to the Chapter 4 committee to modify Section 4.1.4 in accordance with these changes. Language was also added to Section 2.7.2 to clarify the 30 day requirement (from the closing date of one study to the shipment date of another study).

PROPOSED CHANGES TO PT FIELD OF TESTING

Ms. Burmeister said that she modified the chapter to globally change "PT field of testing" to "field of proficiency testing," as proposed by the Program Policy and Structure Committee.

In Section 2.1.3, the elements for fields of testing were changed from "program-matrix-analyte" to "technology-matrix-analyte/analyte group." The changes in this section will be proposed for vote at the Seventh NELAC Annual Meeting (NELAC 7) only if the related changes in Chapter 1 are ratified.

Section C.1 was modified to reference the PT field of testing tables. Ms. Burmeister said that the tables will be updated annually and posted on the NELAC Website. Procedures and timetable for updating and implementing the tables will be developed by the committee.

Section C.5 was added to define the pass/fail criteria for PT analyte groups. Comment was made that if Section C.5 passes in vote at NELAC 7, then laboratories would be required to analyze a PT sample for PCBs (polychlorinated biphenols) that contained the whole group of aroclors. Since PT samples cannot contain all aroclors, an exception is needed. The committee agreed to add the following language to the end of Section C.5.3, "The PCB analyte group is exempt from the 80% pass/fail criteria." Section C.5.1 refers to Section B.1.2 for the definition of PT analyte groups.

Ms. Burmeister said that the Program Policy and Structure Committee and attendees from the PT session at NELAC 6i encouraged the PT Committee to define their own analyte groups for proficiency testing purposes based on available PTs. At Ms. Burmeister's request, Mr. Matt Caruso created a draft list of analyte groups for organics. Ms. Burmeister sent this list to the committee on March 7, 2001. Mr. Caruso reviewed his draft list and proposed breaking up the BNAs into classical groups. During discussion, it was pointed out that the committee needs to be concerned with what groups constitute larger groups. It was also stated that although accreditation can be granted using analyte groups, the accrediting authorities will have to track accreditation on an analyte-by-analyte basis. A committee member suggested that they define not only the analyte groups, but a minimum list of analytes within each group. The committee agreed that it was a good idea and Ms. Burmeister said that she would draft language for Section B.1.2 and send it to the committee.

METHOD CODES UPDATE

Mr. Ralph Obenauf said that he obtained the Environmental Monitoring Methods Index (EMMI) compact disc from the U.S. EPA and discovered that it was not current. However, Mr. Chuck Wibby received a list of methods from New Jersey which was in a workable format and looked fairly comprehensive. Mr. Wibby is currently in the process of compiling a master list from

different programs. He will then add method codes using the system approved on February 26, 2001, and send the list to the committee for review. Mr. Obenauf will bring a full copy of the method code list with him to NELAC 7. Although the committee cannot require accrediting authorities to use the method codes, the committee thinks it will be adopted because consistency is needed.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS RECEIVED

Comment was received from Dr. Ken Jackson about PTs for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in oil. It is currently included in the PT field of testing list under the Clean Water Act (CWA). Dr. Jackson had questioned whether it belonged under Solid and Chemical Materials matrix instead. If so, then there is a dilemma of two PCB PTs being available for that matrix: one in soil and one in oil. According to the PT standard, laboratories would be required to do both to retain accreditation for PCBs in Solid and Chemical Materials. To resolve this problem, Dr. Jackson had suggested removing PCBs in oil from the PT field of testing. The committee discussed the issue and agreed to remove PCBs in oil from the CWA list.

Ms. RaeAnn Haynes and Mr. Matt Caruso brought to the committee's attention, some discussion related to proficiency testing from the NELAP Accrediting Authority Group. There was some discrepancy about the PT requirements for analytes under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Ms. Marykay Steinman said that she reread the FAQ related to this issue, and realized that she interpreted it differently from before. Because it is unclear, the committee will revisit the FAQ and attempt to clarify it.

MEMBERSHIP AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

There were no updates from the Membership and Outreach Committee.

EPA/NIST ITEMS

The EPA database contractor provided comments recommending changes to the Data Reporting and Scoring FAQs. Due to lack of time, these will be discussed during the next teleconference.

MISCELLANEOUS

The next teleconference meeting for the PT Committee will be held on March 27, 2001.

ACTION ITEMS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 13, 2001

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Ms. Barb Burmeister will contact nominees for the PT Committee positions to see if they accept their nominations. She will then notify Dr. Charles Brokopp.	
2.	Ms. Burmeister will draft language for Section B.1.2 and send it to the committee for review. Committee members are asked to reply with comments by March, 16, 2001.	3/16/01
3.	Ms. Burmeister will submit proposed changes to Chapter 2 and its appendices to Ms. Jeanne Hankins by March 19, 2001.	3/19/01
4.	Once the draft method code list is completed, Mr. Obenauf will send it to the committee for review.	
5.	The committee will remove PCBs in oil from the PT field of testing list of analytes under the Clean Water Act.	
6.	The committee will revisit the Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) for NELAC PT requirements for analytes under the Safe Drinking Water Act.	

PARTICIPANTS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 13, 2001

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